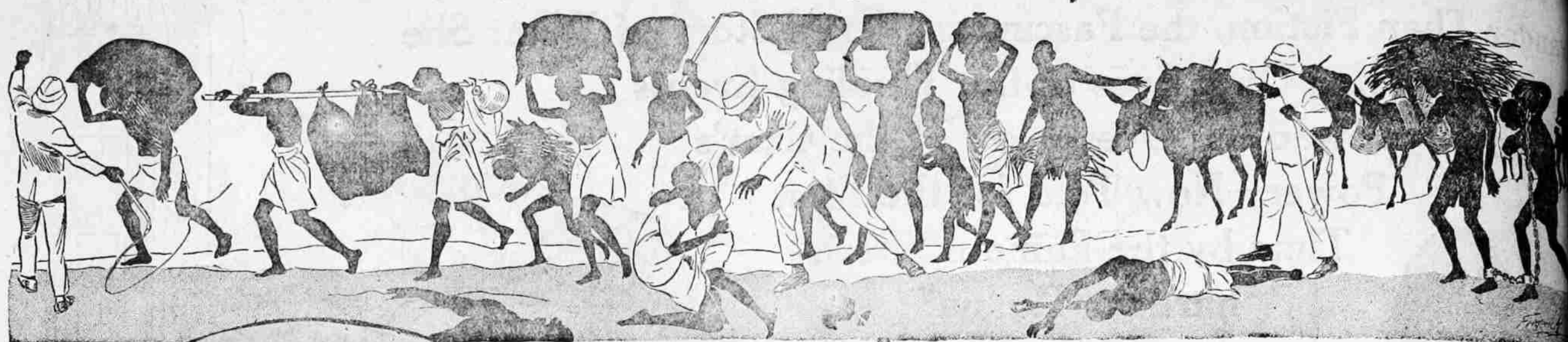


# America's Blame for Human Slavery's Last Cruel Home



"Gangs of slaves, marching in misery and leaving behind them a trail of dead and dying, can be seen by any traveler in southern Abyssinia to-day"



An Abyssinian slave

woman leading a camel loaded with firewood

**H**UMAN slavery is an evil which is generally supposed to have long since ceased to exist in any nation that lays claims to being civilized.

It is therefore a surprise to learn from travelers recently returned from Abyssinia that in this Christian country, whose civilization is recognized by the diplomatic representatives of other civilized nations sent there, human slavery exists to-day, and in more cruel, more infamous forms than the world has ever known.

Still more of a surprise and a very painful one it is to be told that the United States is largely to blame for this outrageous blot on the world's honor—that by our shipments of arms and ammunition to the Abyssinians we are helping to maintain the power that keeps thousands of men, women and children in wicked bondage.

Abyssinia is the last home of open slavery, says a correspondent of "The Westminster Gazette," one of the leading English newspapers. In its capital, Adis Abeba, there are more slaves than free men. The British Legation itself is full of slaves, owned by the legation servants, who would not take service if they were not allowed to bring their chattels with them.

The legation compound is British soil, yet not only do slaves who enter it not become instantly free, but if they have escaped from their owners their owners can and do enter it without hindrance to recapture them. That is an odd enough fact, but a still odder one is that a great many of these slaves are British subjects, captured by slave raids into British territory.

Slave raids, however, require rifles and ammunition, and as France, England and Italy have bound themselves under the arms convention of 1919 not to supply munitions to the Abyssinians, it is only America who is now shipping or seeking to ship arms into the country—arms destined mainly to fill the great Abyssinian slave markets. Today a large consignment of American cartridges and automatic rifles is lying at the French port of Jibuti, awaiting the consent of the French authorities to its transport into the interior, and there is reason to believe that the French authorities, not being very much in love themselves with the Arms Convention and fearing an "incident" with the American government—which probably knows nothing at all of the affair as yet—may shortly give their consent.

So scandalous a state of affairs has not, of course, arisen suddenly, this writer goes on to say. It is only a natural outcome of the general conditions which exist in Abyssinia to-day, and the situation cannot be explained or understood without some reference to the recent history of the country.

Abyssinia owes the preservation of her independence partly to the inability of the neighboring powers to agree on any line of policy as to her future and partly to the great natural capacity and enlightenment of the Emperor Menelik, who ruled the country for nearly a quar-

ter of a century from 1889 to 1913. Menelik built Adis Abeba, laid out paved roads, promoted the construction of a railway from the coast, installed a system of telephones, built bridges and corn mills, introduced a water supply, issued an edict against slavery, established a bank, a school and a hospital in the capital, and imported teachers and doctors from Egypt and elsewhere. Above all, he established a system of law and order throughout the country, and maintained his authority over the provincial governors and subchiefs.

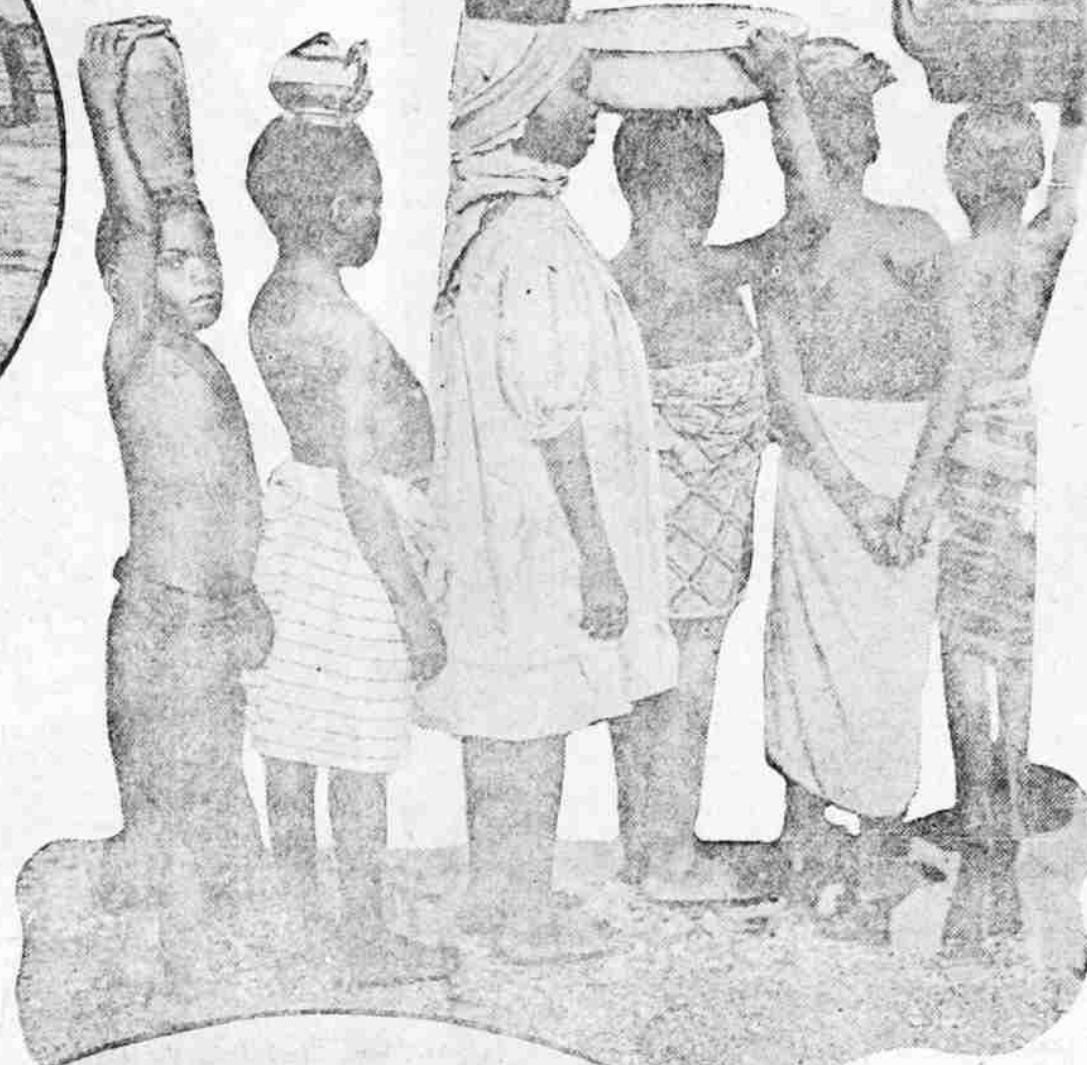
But no sooner had he died, nine years ago, than his work fell to pieces with almost incredible rapidity, and already Abyssinia has relapsed into a state that approaches barbarism. The roads have been left unrepaid, the bridges have crumbled, the water mains have become choked up, the mills mostly out of order, except a few which have been sold to foreigners; the hospital is in ruins, the school has practically ceased to function and the great trunk telephone system is monopolized by the present Regent for his own private use.

The central government exercises no authority that is worth mentioning at a greater distance than ten miles from the palace, and in the capital itself the inhabitants enjoy little or no security either for their persons or for their possessions, so that even the legations have to be constructed more like forts than like private residences.

The remnants of the Menelik civilization are steadily disappearing. No Abyssinian nowadays, for example, from the Regent to the lowest slave, adopts the slightest measure of ordinary sanitation. The road through the royal palace at Adis Abeba, up which the foreign ministers with their glittering staffs pass to pay their court to the sovereign to whom they are accredited, is littered with nauseous and malodorous filth. The open spaces in the palace grounds serve as a mere latrine for the thousands of waiting soldiers, suitors and attendants with which they are normally crowded.

Meanwhile, in the provinces there is no pretense of the maintenance of order. Brigands abound, and between brigands and local chiefs—owing merely nominal allegiance to the central government—there is often not much to choose. If life and property are not safe in the capital they are still less safe anywhere else.

In the days of Emperor Menelik a child might leave Adis Abeba with his cow and drive it to the confines of Abyssinia without fear of molestation. To-



Slave children waiting their turn at the well in the market-place of an Abyssinian village

Few people can realize all that slavery means. A slave, once secured, is a valuable asset who must be cared for and fed—as long as he is able-bodied—as carefully as a horse or a cow, and his actual physical existence need not be intolerable. But when we look at the slave raiding and slave trading which precede slave owning and at all the horrors which these processes involve, the impossible cruelty of the whole system becomes apparent. The early morning raid by a hidden band on a peaceful sleeping village, the smoke of the burning huts, the cries of the women and

children, the death or wounding of the men—all these things are still to be seen in all their pristine ferocity in Abyssinia.

Gangs of slaves, marching in misery and leaving a trail of dead and dying behind them, can be seen by any traveler in southern Abyssinia to-day. Often the men are chained together, the women and children dragging themselves along behind the main

body. Some of these slaves are captured on Abyssinian territory, others in British East Africa, others in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The gangs are not as large as they used to be, because the border districts have been depopulated.

One of "The Westminster Gazette's" correspondents has seen with his own eyes a convoy of 10,000 slaves marching toward the great slave market of Jimma, and in the course of a single day's march along the trail he has counted the dead and dying bodies of more than fifty captives who have dropped by

it is one of the richest countries in the world—richer, probably, than any other country in Africa of similar size. Yet it is decaying. Vast areas are going out of cultivation, partly owing to brigandage and partly to slave raiding.

One of the writers recently passed through an outlying district, which, when he first visited it ten years ago, was a remarkably prosperous and populous country. The soil was so fertile that the hills were terraced for cultivation. To-day it is possible to march through this district for days without

## How the Export of Rifles and Ammunition from the United States Enables Abyssinia to Maintain Some of the Worst Forms of Bondage the World Has Ever Known

the roadside. For on such journeys there is no commissariat department, those who carry no supplies are only for a merciful spear, since alternative is death by thirst or teeth and talons of wild beasts.

Abyssinian raids into the southwest of the Boma plains, British Sudan are constant, and the last six months there have been several raids into the Kenya colony, depopulation of the border and absence of adequate police forces the Abyssinians to advance further, and on one occasion they have penetrated to near the miles into British territory. In certain incidents the British government has claimed reparations, but never obtained the payment of a or the repatriation of a single slave.

The border provinces of Abyssinia are controlled by a gang of robbers and traders who are responsible to the central government. Only the day the Regent in Adis Abeba a present of 140 slaves, most of were children, of both sexes, between ages of six and fourteen, though were adult women with babies breast.

Even the European inhabitants capital can hardly avoid becoming owners. For if a slave is given to you cannot emancipate him, however much you may wish to. You may pay him his wages, your conscience, but the process of emancipation is practically unknown, you set your slave free he is captured and again enslaved.

From this difficulty there is no way out. Short of a deliberate and comprehensive assertion of European authority, which could not be without a very substantial demonstration of physical force, there seems to be no way by which the system of slavery in Abyssinia be abolished. But there is one that is obviously possible, and the prevention of the importation of arms and ammunition.

The Abyssinians possess modern rifles, but their stock of ammunition has fallen very low—perhaps as low as five rounds per rifle in a regular army—and when it is their power to raid and depopulate areas, whether in British or Abyssinian territory, will be destroyed some time. Munitions, therefore, are the crux of the whole question.

The European powers have not to supply Abyssinia with African countries—with materials for their war, but America, unhesitatingly, has taken the contract; and so it is that the Abyssinian government that the Abyssinian government lately turned. Payment was made, three months ago, of cartridges and automatic rifles from the United States, are at the port of Jibuti, in French land, which is the terminus of the Abyssinian railway, waiting the transportation to their destination.

